Home Is Where You Feel Safe

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Home Is Where You Feel Safe

by Reported_MIA

Summary

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For a second, Frank doesn't. He stays buried behind his palms, his entire body trembling with residual panic that won't quite leave him alone. Robby is patient with him, though, and he eventually puts his hands down into his lap, blankly staring ahead with a tear-stained face and hollow eyes.

“Abby hits me sometimes.”

Robby's stomach *drops*.

Notes

99% of my WIPs feature bffs happily-married polyamorous frank/abby.

This is one of the 1% LMAOOOOO

Robby should never have fucking come in today.

He knew it from the second he opened his Goddamn eyes, and yet he still came. *It's time,* he'd told himself that morning as he forced himself out of bed and into the shower. *I can't avoid it forever. It's time. I can do this.*

And now? Now he's busting his best senior resident for diverting, tipped off by a fucking intern on her first fucking day.

Vaguely, he can hear Frank trying to plead his case. *You remember last year? When I helped my parents move and I hurt my back? You even teased me about it!* He babbles frantically, desperately trying to make him meet his eyes, but Robby refuses. *You know me, Robby! You know me!*

Apparently fucking not.

So he yanks Frank's shit out of his locker and slams it against his chest, shoving him as far away from himself as possible. “Leave now, or I will have Ahmad escort you out,” he says plainly, struggling to keep his voice even. It still wavers from the anger, the hurt, the betrayal, and most of all, the fucking disappointment.

Still, Frank lingers in the hallway, his grip on his belongings white-knuckled and his eyes wide and so, so desperate. “Robby, please,” he begs, and Goddamn, Robby nearly caves. Nearly pulls this stupid fucking idiot into his arms, nearly forgives him right then and there.

Instead, he looks away and steels his resolve. “You're *done,* Langdon,” he tells him coldly, resolutely, with no room for argument. He doesn't turn his gaze back to him, instead squeezing his eyes tight and pinching the bridge of his nose. “You're done. *Go home.”*

It goes dead quiet in the hallway after that. No words, no breaths, but no footsteps either, meaning that Frank is still fucking standing there, still looking at him with those sad fucking eyes. Robby grinds his teeth together for a moment in an attempt to regain his composure before finally turning back to look at him, ready to hammer it in.

The sight that greets him makes him falter.

Frank is indeed still standing there, but he's not quite looking at Robby anymore. His eyes are fixed on the ground at Robby's feet, no longer looking just lost and purposeless. Now, his gaze can only be

described as faraway and unseeing. He looks…

Well. If Robby didn't know any better, he'd say Frank looks fucking terrified.

“No,” he starts, his voice just barely above a whisper, so quiet Robby has to strain his old-man ears to hear it. Frank begins to slowly shake his head. “No, no, *no,* Robby, I can't— I *can't* go home like this. If— If I go home and Abby finds out I've lost my job, she's going to kill me.”

Robby scowls and crosses his arms over his chest. “You should've thought about that before you—”

His words are interrupted by the dull thud Frank's belongings make as they get unceremoniously dropped to the ground. Robby blinks at them, then up at Frank, and freezes upon realizing that Frank was now occupying his hands by gripping the silky brown locks atop his head tight, tight enough that any harder and he would tear his hair right out of his scalp.

“You don't *understand!”* Frank exclaims, and Robby rears back in shock and confusion. Frank shakes his head faster, more frantically, as he goes on. “Robby, she's going to *kill me.* She's *actually* going to *kill me— she—!”*

And suddenly, Frank is on the floor, curling in on himself and gasping for air like he was being actively hung from a noose.

Alarm shoots through Robby like lightning and he's immediately kneeling by the younger man's side, hands hovering but not quite touching. Frank is hyperventilating, his eyes overflowing with tears and his entire frame shaking violently as he heaves and sobs between shallow breaths.

Robby's heart races in his chest, bewilderment and worry coursing through his veins. There's still a little hint of that upset, that betrayal, but it's so far in the back of his mind he's practically completely forgotten where it came from in the first place.

“*Frank!”* He calls out sharply, and pretends he doesn't feel sick when the man flinches at his raised voice. Carefully, he pries open Frank's white-knuckled fists, replacing the locks of hair within with his own hands. “Hey, hey, Frank, listen, *listen* to me. It's me, it's Robby. We're at the hospital, remember? We're in the locker room, and you're safe. Can you hear me? You're *safe.”*

Frank's eyes finally leave the tiles and look up to Robby's, meeting his gaze. Robby nods encouragingly, holding his trembling hands even tighter to help ground him. “S-Safe,” Frank stammers, like the word is foreign to him, and Robby swallows thickly.

“That's right. Can you breathe for me? Take a deep breath through your nose like this,” he takes one of Frank's hands and places it on his chest, then inhales deeply. Frank shakily attempts to mimic the motion, though it stutters repeatedly.

He guides him until he gets it, and when he does, smiles softly and wipes away at some of Frank's freefalling tears. “That's good, you're doing so good,” he reassures him, and Frank sniffles, some color returning to his face as he keeps their eye contact steady. “Now hold that breath for three seconds, then let it out slowly. Can you do that for me?”

Frank nods, processing the words and doing as told. When he finally comes back to himself, he stiffly inches away from his mentor and falls back onto the lockers, almost immediately moving to hide his face in his hands.

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For a second, Frank doesn't. He stays buried behind his palms, his entire body trembling with residual panic that won't quite leave him alone. Robby is patient with him, though, and he eventually puts his hands down into his lap, blankly staring ahead with a tear-stained face and hollow eyes.

“Abby hits me sometimes.”

Robby's stomach *drops.*

“Not a lot,” he hurries to tack on, like that somehow softens the blow, “but, y'know, enough. She doesn’t mean to do it, but sometimes she just gets so angry. She'd never hurt the kids, not that I'd ever let her, so I'm the next best thing.”

If he's being honest with himself, Robby barely hears any of that. His ears are ringing, and he's still stuck on *Abby hits me sometimes* while Frank keeps talking casually like he were talking about the weather.

“Coming to work is the only time I'm not scared,” he confesses softly, and Robby feels his heart shatter to a million fucking pieces. “So when you told me to go home, I kind of… freaked out. Especially when I know I won't be coming back. So… I'm sorry.”

Those words finally snap Robby back to reality and he turns to Frank with incredulous eyes. “Don't you *dare* apologize,” he tells him firmly, and Frank looks startled at the intensity of his words. “Not for this. *Never* for this.”

Another hush falls over the two of them as Franks swallows the lump in his throat and nods, not even attempting to argue with the older man. Robby lets his head fall back onto the lockers and looks up at the ceiling, a million questions swirling through his head before he chooses one.

“Did she... do something recently?” He settles to ask, and Frank blinks at him for a moment. He can read between the lines though, can figure out what Robby's really asking.

Is this why you have the Librium?

“Yeah,” he answers hesitantly, his voice raw and exhausted as he wrings his hands together anxiously. “Last week. She pushed me down the stairs.”

Robby shoots up like a bullet and looks at Frank with horrified eyes. “I was fine!” Frank placates immediately, before his eyes glance down at the pocket Robby had staffed the Librium in and he grimaces. “Well, *mostly* fine. I checked myself out and only had a bruised rib and agitated back, but nothing broke. Didn't even hit my head.”

“Frank,” Robby says, in a tone that sounds an awful lot like he's really saying *are you hearing yourself?* He doesn't say that, though, instead running a hand through his hair to calm himself. “Frank, that's *not okay.”*

The younger man's jaw tightens for a moment as he looks away. “Yeah, well, neither is me diverting narcotics from my workplace,” he reminds the other sharply, his voice full of venom and self-loathe. “I didn't tell you this to guilt-trip you. You should still report me. I deserve it.”

“Shut the fuck up,” is what Robby replies with, and Frank's startles again, not unlike a deer caught in headlights. Robby looks at him seriously, meaningfully, and pushes himself ever-closer. “Here's what's

gonna happen. You're gonna clock out, but you're not gonna go home. You're gonna go sit in the break room until my shift is over, and then you're gonna come crash at mine's for the night."

Frank's eyes widen at the words. "What? No, I— I can't ask you to do that—"

"You didn't, and I'm not offering you charity or pity or whatever bullshit you're thinking," Robby interjects immediately. "This isn't me shielding you from your mistakes. This is me helping my friend take the first step in recovering from addiction and abuse."

The words *addiction and abuse* hang heavily between them, but apparently, that's not what catches Frank's attention most. "I thought you said we weren't friends," he remarks, and it's supposed to be a joke, but he's just far too tired to make it land right.

Robby snorts lightly and shakes his head. "I'm full of shit," he supplies helpfully, and the soft laugh that Frank gives him in return feels like a fucking balm on his soul. Without thinking, he holds out his arm to his side, and wordlessly, Frank falls into it. Robby exhales shakily into his hair.

"You're my *guy,* Frank," he tells him matter-of-factly, running his hand through his hair. "I've got you, okay? I've got you."

Frank turns his face into his shoulder and clutches at the front of his hoodie tightly. "You've got me," he repeats quietly, and Robby pulls him closer into his side, holding him tighter.

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